

GREETINGS FROM BERLIN

Summer 2023



DEAR FRIENDS AND FAMILY,

We hope you're doing well and enjoying summer. A big THANKS to all of you for staying in touch, praying for us and supporting us - we don't say it often enough, but it means a lot and you are such an encouragement to us!

Here are a few bullet points on what's been going on in our life and at Projekt:Kirche...

Life in Berlin

- The **war in the Ukraine** is still dominating headlines here. It also has a big impact on everyday life: More than 1 Mio Ukrainians (almost exclusively women and children) have come to Germany to stay for the foreseeable future. Through our neighbourhood space we're hosting a family café and art school for them.
- Another tangible effect the war has had is the **rise of living costs** (mostly heating, electricity and groceries / food).
- Climate change is a big topic: A group of mostly young people calling themselves "**The Last Generation**" has made a name for themselves by supergluing themselves onto the street to block traffic. This has been a weekly thing in multiple major intersections in Berlin. As you can imagine this has caused some aggressive reactions.
- Even though a lot of people are still doing fairly well, it is in the grumpy German nature to not ask anymore when is this crisis going to be over (as we did during Corona), but: Which crisis is going to be next?



Family Life

- June is **birthday month** in our family. Anouk turned 4 and invited her whole daycare group over. Ellie turned 7 and celebrated with some close and new friends from school.
- We visited Joe's aunt who is part of a (lutheran) monastic community in Bavaria.
- Joelle was part of a "**Reset-Weekend**" organised by our church - it was a very refreshing and enlightening time both personally and spiritually.
- Joe's quest to manage his stress by doing **sports** has resulted in participating in a half-marathon and triathlon.
- We continue to share a **gardening** patch with some friends - our girls are getting quite excited about planting and harvesting our own fruit & veggies.

Church Life

- Our **kids ministry** continues to grow (about a third of our church are kids age 0-8yrs), both with kids being born and new families / single parents joining the church because they are looking for a place where their kids can explore faith. Our kids-team has grown as well, but you can still pray it can keep up with the children.
- We've focused on **building community** in the past few months - both with an **inward focus**: going on a weekend-

retreat, having Reset-Weekends for small groups of 5-10 people, starting new small groups-and an **outward focus**: The neighbourhood space at our office is booked almost every night of the week with AA-groups, creative workshops, Ukrainian art school and family café, an African womens group, ... and more.

- Another ministry focus for Joe has been **building healthy spiritual rhythms** both for himself and the staff-team. If you want to have a closer look on what that looks like, simply read the personal reflections at the end of this newsletter.

How you can pray

- Vision and Wisdom for Joe and his team on how to lead the church.
- A growing culture of generosity within the congregation and an increase in internal donations.
- Healing for people within Projekt:Kirche struggling with depression and anxiety.
- A person called to lead our growing kids ministry.
- An openness within the congregation to continue to find new ways of connecting to our neighbours and share God's love with them.

Personal Reflections after one year of leading Projekt:Kirche

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15,5

I've always loved these words from Jesus. Here are a few reflections on how I've grown to love them even more in my new role as lead pastor of Projekt:Kirche over the past year.

Many people in our congregation (and beyond) have expressed a sense of running ever faster and at the same time wondering more and more what comes out of it: We write more messages and communicate with more people than ever before, but feel a lack of deep and meaningful friendship in our lives. Technology allows us to work more efficiently, yet the number of hours we put into work keeps increasing and the answer to the question: What have we *actually* accomplished today? Where is the fruit? becomes less and less tangible.

Simply slowing down, or doing less, is often not the solution. Life needs rhythm - including spiritual rhythms that help us to "remain in Jesus."

This is where I see a great (and maybe sometimes overlooked) opportunity for the church as an employer: As a pastor I can (and do) preach about the importance of spending time with God - if people will actually adjust their rhythms to make space for God though, is to a large degree up to them. I can, however, be very intentional in building spiritual rhythms into the working hours of the church's employees.

So one of the first things I did, was to implement one workday a month for each of our staff-members (including myself) to be dedicated to "remaining in Jesus." It's up to each of our employees how exactly they use this day - for me it often means getting out of the city and finding a quiet spot in nature to pray, journal, or read.

To be honest it took me a few months to get used to this new rhythm myself: Even finding a day to block completely from work- and other commitments proved to be quite the challenge. Ticking off nothing from my full To-Do List for an entire day felt more like adding unnecessary stress to my schedule rather than "being fruitful."

With time I have been more and more encouraged though, by the fruit growing out of this practice for my team and myself: Finding joy and meaning in what we do, wisdom and clarity on what to prioritise, issues rising to the surface that I've pushed aside for too long, being able to let go of unnecessary worries, new ideas on how to deal with a conversation, issue or person, ... and more.

A year ago I thought dedicating an entire work-day each month to this was radical and maybe overdoing it a little bit. The fruit starting to grow out of this time though has convinced me that this can only be the beginning :-)

If any of this resonates with you or you have any thoughts and experiences related to this - let me know! I'd love to connect and exchange thoughts on this.

Financial Update

We continue to be blown away by your generosity in supporting us financially. This is particularly true as living costs have increased substantially in Germany in the past year. We're setup well with our small apartment (low heating costs!) and being used to a simple lifestyle. Without your support we would be under considerably more financial stress though.

As was the case in previous years we are committed to raising 8.000 CAD (~5.000 EUR) to support the church in covering Joe's salary. Thanks to your ongoing generosity we will be able to reach this goal in 2023 as well.

Anything given beyond this amount this year will go to us personally to top up the reduced salary Joe is receiving from the church.

THANK YOU!

Once more we can only say how grateful we are for you being with us in all of this!

Joe & Joelle

With Ellie and Anouk

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

You can support us financially by donating online at
<https://www.adventive.ca/make-a-donation-canada/>

Select the **Germany Kirche 1** designation fund under **Europe**. Thank you!

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